

Remarks as Delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen
Naval Facilities Engineering Command Change of Command
27 October 2006

Terry, thank you for the kind introduction. Secretary Penn, General Strock, Admirals McCarthy, Rondeau, and Brown, ladies and gentlemen.

What a great Navy day.

I've actually participated in a few of these Change of Command ceremonies. I joined the Navy in 19mmmm, never mind when and have been privileged to speak at several others.

This Change of Command is one of the most important ceremonies we have.

Right now, Mike Loose is the Commanding Officer for over 17,000 military, civilians and contractors, and twelve component commands.

He is endowed with all the weighty and pervasive authority, responsibility and accountability of command that bedrock of our Naval Profession for our 231 years of existence.

And yet, in a few minutes, he will – with a few simple words before the men and women of his command – transfer the burdens and joys of command to Admiral Greg Shear.

It is that time-honored tradition that makes this day special.

This is also special for the Loose family. For Carol and their son Chris. For his dad, Bud, his brother CDR Mark Loose and sister Sheila, and for all of the other members of his family who traveled so far to be here with us.

Carol, thank you for your service at N-I-H and your extraordinary support of Mike, we are lucky to have you as part of this team.

Our Navy families are also lucky. You have touched so many of them with your kindness. Deborah and I look forward to seeing more of both of you.

I know Mike would tell you, behind every great officer there is a Chief somewhere.

But in his case, the Chief just happened to be his Dad.

Anyone who knows him, knows that Bud Loose is more than a great father and a Chief, he is a patriot.

Not even 18 years of age – he begged his own father’s permission – to raise his hand so he could defend the nation during World War II.

And that is what he did. Across the Pacific on Okinawa and in many other places.

A few years after the war, he so missed the sense of serving, that he signed on again. The Seabees were full, so he became an Electronics Technician.

The Navy took him all over the world and again to war in Vietnam.

He rose not only to be an ET Chief but also a Commissioned Officer who had command himself.

Bud, thank you for your willingness to serve so nobly.

For your example.

And for raising children who are willing to serve as well.

I never miss an opportunity to thank the parents of those who children grow up to wear the uniform.

That goes for Wayne and Virginia Shear too. I know Wayne is a Navy veteran as well.

Wayne and Virginia, thank you for being here for Greg and Marlene as they take on this exciting new challenge.

As I look out at Greg and Marlene's daughter Renee, their son Daniel, Marlene's parents Norman and Gerry, and quite a few other relatives, it clear that this is a special bunch.

I, for one, know that our Navy is richly blessed to have such talented and special men as Mike Loose and Greg Shear as leaders of the Civil Engineer Corps.

The first time I ever met Mike Loose I was instantly impressed by his boundless energy and focused leadership.

I didn't know much about our Civil Engineers, but it was clear Mike did, and he was working very hard to make them even better.

His staff says, "just wind him up – give him a diet coke – and then hold on." It is always a fast and full day with Mike.

One of Mike's full days was back in 1991 – that was his very first day working on the OPNAV staff.

He got up that morning and took the bus to the Pentagon from the house he and Carol had just rented in Burke.

He was so focused on learning his new job as a Branch Head in N-44, he missed the last bus home.

Fortunately, a shipmate offered him a ride.

The problem was that Mike had absolutely no idea where he lived.

And he couldn't even remember his new phone number to call Carol and ask. That made his day even longer.

But the one thing Mike has never, ever forgotten is his duty to the country, to the Seabees, to the entire Civil Engineer community, and most of all to his people.

And every step of his career he led and focused his energy where it counted.

That leadership has been so critical here at NAV-FAC because this command and his Seabees are so important to the shaping the world we live in today.

If the attack on the destroyer Cole, the treachery of 9-11, if events across the globe from London to Lebanon, Baghdad to Bali, from P'yongyang to Tehran have taught us anything – it is that the fight we are in is really about two competing visions of the future.

Our vision of all freedom-loving people is one of hope, of prosperity, and of a secure future for our children and for all children.

The enemies we face – and will face – offer no hope at all. Theirs is a dark, extremist vision of fear, tyranny, death and despair.

Poverty, crime, illness, smuggling, slavery, corruption, rotting infrastructure, and disrespect for human rights all contribute to the instability and insecurity from which terrorism festers and grows.

We can and must use everything at our disposal to prevent that instability – to fight off those who would do us harm – and to actively protect both our people and our values.

Today, the Seabees are on the front lines of that fight.

They are as hotly engaged as they have ever been.

Every time I visit Seabees, the images could come straight out of a John Wayne movie.

I can tell that World War II image of rugged, independent, determined, innovative Seabees – like Bud Loose – is alive and well.

I saw it just after Katrina on our Gulf Coast. I came across a group of them building a dining facility.

Apparently the contractor had had trouble getting enough resources on hand. The Seabees didn't stop, didn't ask permission. They just jumped right in to help, and by the time I got there the thing was already half done.

One of them simply said, "Heck, we know how to do this, so why not?" And that's the same attitude they've displayed throughout crisis after crisis.

Not just on the Gulf Coast, but in places like Iraq and Pakistan where they are helping people re-build their countries and their lives.

When I was last in CENTCOM, I had lunch with a group of Seabees building a base camp out in the middle of western Iraq.

The sand we stood on was so soft and thick you'd think you were walking on powdered sugar.

How they managed to build anything on that surface I'll never know, but they were hard at work and they loved every minute of what they were doing.

It is that same historic can do spirit of the Seabees that Mike has clearly harnessed, as the Chief of Civil Engineers, to accomplish great things.

Whether it was overhauling the Individual Augmentee process or formulating our strategy to respond to natural disasters like Katrina, Mike assured that our Seabees were trained and properly supported to do their mission.

And as Commander of NAV-FAC, his terrific efforts to improve the efficiency and productivity of naval facilities globally have been truly remarkable.

During his tenure, NAV-FAC reduced mishaps by three fold, upgraded our facilities to better meet the needs of the warfighter, and embraced the Enterprise model to save the taxpayers over 600 million dollars.

And as great leaders seem to do, he gives all the credit to the men and women of NAV-FAC. Time and again, I have heard him describe them as super-stars.

No one cares more. Mike and Carole are always there for Sailors and families in good times and in bad.

As one of them put it, “Admiral Loose is the heart of NAV-FAC. His dedication, compassion, humor, and willingness to listen have made all the difference.”

That is powerful testimony.

Just as Mike sometimes can’t find his way home, his super-star staff sometimes has trouble finding him.

Last Monday, he went missing for over thirty minutes.

The search party went out. They finally found the Chief of Naval Facilities – stuck in the elevator.

Now I am sure Mike spent that entire time trying to fix it.

Because that is what he does – solve tough problems – no matter how big or how small.

Mike, our Navy and nation and the people of NAV-FAC have been so fortunate to have you at this helm – doing that – for these past three years.

Indeed, it is a true testament to NAV-FAC's terrific performance during Mike's tenure that we have nominated him for a third star and our N-4.

Congratulations, Mike and Carol! We look forward to seeing you back in OPNAV.

Carol, please make sure Mike can find his way home this time.

Greg, now it's your turn. I know you are ready to begin this exciting new chapter. And you're the right man to continue the momentum, accelerate it and take NAV-FAC to the next level.

We expect a lot.

I know you will be great. You too have a distinguished record of service, and watching you contribute has for me been a great professional joy.

You have made such a difference and I know you will continue to do so in command in this time of war.

Deborah and I are very excited for you and Marlene and wish you all our best for a successful tour.

Mike, it is that time. Please come forward so we can formally recognize you for an incredible job well done.